


What is claimed is:

1. In a communications system including a server, which is adapted to run a server application, a message router communicating with the server, a plurality of protocol gateways communicating with the message routers, and a network, which is adapted to couple the server, through the message routers and the protocol gateways, to client devices, a method of sending an alert to selected client devices, the method comprising:
 - a) generating the alert with the server application, the alert including customer information;
 - b) sending the alert to the message router;
 - c) retrieving, with the message router, a station ID of the client device based on the customer information;
 - d) determining a communication type of the client device based on the station ID;
 - e) selecting one or more of the plurality of protocol gateways based on the communication type; and
 - f) forwarding the alert to the selected one or more of the plurality of protocol gateways;
 - g) formatting the alert with the protocol gateway for the selected client device; and
 - h) forwarding the formatted alert via the network to the selected client device.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer information includes at least one of a customer ID and a port number.
 3. The method of claim 2 wherein step d) further comprises searching a user table to obtain the station ID associated with the customer ID.
 4. The method of claim 2 wherein step d) further comprises searching a local cache of the message router for the station ID associated with the customer ID.
 5. The method of claim 2, wherein step d) further comprises searching a local cache of the message router and a device table for a first device associated with the customer ID when both the customer ID and port number are provided.
 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising, if no station ID is retrieved, returning an inactive customer message to the server.
 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising segmenting the alert with the selected protocol gateway into message segments before sending the alert over the network.
 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising assembling the message segments at the client device.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the alert includes at least one of an alert message, a compression flag, an encryption flag, and an acknowledgement flag.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising returning an acknowledgement to the selected protocol gateway after receiving the formatted alert message at the client device.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising forwarding the acknowledgement from the selected protocol gateway to the server.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the customer information is a client information object.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the client information object includes a customer ID and a device ID.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the alert includes an active device only flag and wherein the device ID can be set to all devices.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising, if the active device only flag is set and the device ID is specified, searching a local cache of the message router for the station ID.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising, if the station ID is not located in the local cache, searching a user table for the station ID.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising, if the active device only flag is set and the device ID is set to all devices, searching only the user table for active client devices associated with the customer ID.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising, if the active device only flag is not set and the device ID is specified, searching a local cache of the message router for the station ID.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising, if the station ID is not located in the local cache, searching a device table for the station ID.

20. The method of claim 14, further comprising, if the active only flag is not set and the device ID is set to all devices, searching a device table for client devices associated with the customer ID.

21. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing each station ID retrieved in step c) to the server.

22. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing each station ID retrieved by the message router to the server, before forwarding the alert to the protocol gateway.

23. A method of sending alerts to client devices, comprising:

- generating the alert at a server, the alert including a customer ID and a device ID;
- forwarding the alert to a message router;
- locating with the message router one or more station IDs based on the customer ID and device ID;
- determining with the message router a communication type associated with each station ID;
- forwarding the alert to a protocol gateway associated with the determined communication type; and
- transmitting the alert with the protocol gateway over a network to the client devices.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising receiving the alert with a transport layer of an application running on the protocol gateway and sending the alert from the transport layer to client applications.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising segmenting the alert into message segments with the protocol gateway.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the client application assemble the message segments.

27. The method of claim 23, further comprising sending an acknowledgement from the client device to the protocol gateway once the alert is received by the client device.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising, after receiving the acknowledgement from the client device, sending the acknowledgement from the protocol gateway to the server that forwarded the alert.

29. The method of claim 23, wherein the alert comprises at least one of an alert message, a client information object including the customer ID and device ID, message flags, compression flag and an encryption flag.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the messages flags specify at least one of:
whether the server requires an acknowledgement message;
whether the alert should be sent only if the client device is currently active; and
whether the protocol gateway should only attempt message delivery once.

31. The method of claim 23, wherein the alert includes an active device only flag and the device ID can be set to all devices.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the locating step comprises:
a) if the active device only flag is set and the device ID is specified, searching a local cache of the message router for the station ID;

- b) if the active device only flag is set and the device ID is set to all devices, searching only a user table for active client devices associated with the customer ID;
- c) if the active device only flag is not set and the device ID is specified, searching a local cache of the message router for the station ID; and
- d) if the active device only flag is not set and the device ID is set to all devices, searching a device table for client devices associated with the customer ID.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising, for steps a) and c), searching a database for the station ID if the station ID is not found in the local cache.

34. The method of claim 31, further comprising, if device ID set to all devices, providing each device ID located to server.

35. The method of claim 31, further comprising , if no device is located and the device ID is set to all devices, sending an inactive message to the server, otherwise sending a customer not valid message.

36. The method of claim, 23 further comprising formatting the alert for the client device with the protocol gateway.